



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Blue Mountain
Ranger District

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File Code: 1950

Date: March 10, 2002



Dear Forest User:

The Blue Mountain Ranger District has completed the Blue Aquatic—Culvert Replacement Environmental Assessment (EA) enclosed in this package. The District is offering the document for a 30 day public review and comment period which begins March 12, 2003 and ends at close of business on April 11, 2003.

This EA analyzes the effects of implementing road crossing improvements within the Blue Mountain Ranger District portion of the Galena Watershed including: culvert replacement, replacing culverts with rocked fords, and installing armored drain dips. This project is being implemented to allow all life stages of threatened and sensitive fish species to pass through streams in the Vinegar Creek, Vincent Creek and Granite Boulder subwatersheds and to reduce sediment in stream channels. The project area is located approximately 30 air miles northeast of John Day, Oregon.

Alternative 2, the proposed action, would replace old culverts that are fish barriers with open bottomed arch culverts, or box culverts with open bottoms that simulate natural streambeds. The reason for this project is to remove existing fish passage barriers at 8 culvert sites in Granite Boulder Creek, Vinegar Creek, and Vincent Creeks and to address potential erosion problems at 3 other culvert sites in Vinegar Creek and Vincent Creeks. These 3 sites are being treated because they may produce damaging sediment to fish bearing portions, downstream of the locations in case floods occur. Granite Boulder Creek, Vinegar Creek, and Vincent Creeks are all tributaries of the Middle Fork of the John Day River. The EA may also be viewed at the Forest website at: www.fs.fed.us/r6/malheur

Comments on the analysis should be addressed to: Blue Aquatics—Culvert replacement, Michael Montgomery, District Ranger, and mailed to P.O. Box 909, John Day, OR 97845. Written comments must be postmarked and oral comments need to be received within 30 days of this notice, as set out in the 36 CFR 215 Appeal Regulations, effective January 3, 1994. This public notice is appearing in the Blue Mountain Eagle, John Day Oregon, March 12, 2003.

If you have any site-specific issues or concerns with this proposal, please send your response to me by **April 11, 2003**. The identification of your issues or concerns is an important step in the environmental analysis process and I welcome your input. For additional information or clarification, contact James Kelly-Project Leader, Brian Lynch-District NEPA Coordinator, or myself at (541) 575-3000.

Sincerely,

/s/Michael L. Montgomery
District Ranger

Enclosures:

Environmental Assessment and Appendices

Project Points	Location & type of Single Span Structures and approximate implementation date	Location of Engineered Rock ford and approximate implementation date	Location of Armored drain dips and approximate implementation date	Legal Description
Project Point 6 Alt 1 10page Alt 2 page14	FR2010292 Vincent Creek/07/15 to 08/15/2003— open-bottom arch —			T10S, R35E,S6,NE (Private Land)
Project Point 7 Alt 1 page 11 Alt 2 page14		FR2010292 (101) at milepost 0.02-Vincent Creek;07/15 to 08/15; 2003		T10S, R35E, S32, SW
Project 8 Alt 1 page11 Alt 2 page15		FR2010429 Vincent Creek/07/15 to 08/15; 2003		T11S, R35E
Project Point 9 Alt 1 page 11 Alt 2 page15			FR 2010986 at milepost 0.3; Vincent Creek; 2003	T 10 S, R 35 E, Section 30, SE quarter
Project Point 10 Alt 1 page 11Alt 2 page15			FR2010993 FR 2010993 at milepost 0.7; Vincent Creek; 2003	T 10 S, R 35 E, Section 30, NE quarter
Project Point 11 Alt 1 page 11 Alt 2 page15	FR4559283 Granite Boulder Creek/ at milepost 0.1; 07/15 to 08/15/2003—box culvert			T10S, R34E, S28, NE

1.4 Issues and Relevant Federal, State, Local Government, and Public Involvement

A scoping letter sent on June 21, 2002, to interested members of the public, tribal and state and local governments.

1.5. Response to Public Comments

Five letters were received regarding this project. Originally, this project included the placement of large woody material to improve fish habitat in this area and enhancing aspen habitat. Three comments were received which voiced concern about Forest Service placement of wood in stream. The Forest Service decided that in response to the comments which objected to the placement of large woody material to improve fish habitat, to not proceed with that portion of the Aquatics work at this time. Additionally, the Forest Service has decided the enhancing of aspen habitat would be postponed to a later date as well.

After considering comments from the public about fish bearing reaches of Vinegar, and Vincent Creeks, the forest Service re-surveyed stream reaches on Vinegar Creek which revealed a 25 foot falls that would present a barrier to fish access above these falls. Because of information gained from comments from the public culvert replacement, upstream of these falls would be limited to high flow relief and repair to reduce the potential of erosion during peak flow periods. Other issues considered from public scoping are the following:

- **Mining:** No activity will impact withdrawn mineral ownership. Owners of withdrawn mineral rights³ are being notified. Mining claims will not be impacted. If mercury from historic mining is found during project work, it would be treated in the appropriate and legal manner (see 2.3.2.4.5—Mitigation for historic mining concerns page 20).

³ Withdrawn mineral rights are privately owned mineral rights on federal land.